



Committee on Homeland Security Democrats

Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member

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RESPONSE TO CHERTOFF'S DISMISSAL OF TRANSIT SECURITY:

Americans Traveling on Roads, Rails and Buses Deserve Better

WASHINGTON— Congressman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, released the following statement in response to Secretary Michael Chertoff's comment yesterday that aviation security is more of a priority to him than protecting our nation's roads, rails and buses.

"It is stunning that the leader of our nation's homeland security efforts can so casually dismiss the threat to our subways and trains," Congressman Thompson stated. "In 1995, the Aum Shinrikyo cult released sarin gas on the Tokyo subway, causing casualties and numerous injuries to hundreds. In 2004, terrorists attacked Madrid's trains, setting off explosives. Last week, we mourned with our ally Britain over multiple attacks in London's bus and train systems."

"How many attacks will it take before this Administration acts proactively to protect America's 30 million daily commuters?" asked the Congressman. "Just because we have been fortunate here in the United States to not have a catastrophic incident on a subway, does not mean it is not possible. Before 9/11, most people didn't think an airplane could be flown into a building. The Department and its leaders must be forward-thinking if we are to prevent terrorists from striking here at home."

Congressman Thompson also remains concerned by Mr. Chertoff's comments that subways are not a priority because the Secretary believes an attack "may kill 30 people," as opposed to 3,000 in an airplane. The Secretary should apologize to the American people and should remember that more people use public transit every day than take airplanes.

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